

Renewal and Attrition in Private Tennis Coaching Services for Beijing's Youth: A Comparative Thematic Analysis Centered on Parent-Coach Interaction and Perceived Service Value

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Abstract— Amid the expansion of the youth sports training market, course renewal versus dropout has become a critical issue for the sustainable operation of private tennis coaching services. This study aimed to compare renewing and churning families in terms of service experience, trust formation, perception of value evidence, and decision-making mechanisms, and to extract actionable retention governance strategies. A comparative qualitative case study design was adopted, grouping participants into a renewal group (stable renewal for ≥ 2 cycles or ≥ 6 months) and a churn group (cessation for ≥ 8 weeks or explicit termination). Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, process communication records, and coach reflection memos, and thematic analysis combined with cross-group constant comparison was employed to extract themes and mechanistic chains. Five core themes emerged: value evidence (visualization of progress), trust (relational buffer), expectation management and gap repair, service friction (accumulation of rules and coordination costs), and risk and safety thresholds. The renewal pathway follows the chain of evidence-based delivery, trust maintenance, gap repair, friction governance, and safety threshold, whereas the churn pathway is typically triggered by insufficient value evidence and trust gaps, with withdrawal provoked by risk concerns amid time pressure and accumulated rule friction. Enhancing retention therefore hinges not on one-off satisfaction, but on stabilizing parents' value judgments through evidence-based, explainable, and predictable delivery mechanisms, and on reducing service friction through rule governance.

Keywords— Attrition, Private Coach, Renewal, Service Quality, Thematic Analysis, Youth Tennis.

I. INTRODUCTION

Against the backdrop of the integration of sports and education and the rapid expansion of extracurricular sports training, youth tennis training is increasingly characterized by market-oriented operations and high-frequency service delivery. Compared with group classes, private coaching services are defined by high-touch interaction, pronounced individual differences, and strong relational attributes. Consequently, renewal (repeat purchase/retention) and attrition (churn) have emerged as core variables impacting

the operational stability of both individual coaches and institutions.

Existing research largely draws on theories of service quality, satisfaction, and loyalty to explain continuous consumption. However, in the context of youth private coaching, the separation of the paying decision-maker (the parent) from the service recipient (the student), heightened academic pressure and safety accountability, and more pronounced institutional frictions—such as scheduling and make-up classes—render the mechanisms of renewal and attrition more process-driven and context-dependent.

In light of this, this study takes Beijing's youth private tennis coaching as its research setting and employs a comparative thematic analysis to identify the key differences between renewing and churning families. It aims to address the following questions:

- (1) How do renewing and churning families differ in their perception of service value and their demand for evidence?
- (2) How do trust and expectation management influence renewal versus withdrawal during periods of training volatility?
- (3) What actionable management strategies can reduce attrition and enhance the stability of renewal?

II. LITERATURE REVIEW AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical foundation of this study is primarily drawn from research on sports service quality, the mechanisms of satisfaction, trust, and loyalty, the professionalization of private coaching, as well as studies on the governance of the youth sports training market and family factors.

Research on sports service quality emphasizes that service quality can be decomposed into elements such as personnel, processes, environment, and outcomes, and can be assessed through customer perception. In fitness and training services, service quality typically influences

loyalty and sustained consumption by shaping customer satisfaction and trust.

Furthermore, discussions on the professionalization of private coaching suggest that, beyond technical competence, coaches must possess the capabilities for service delivery, communication and explanation, and standardized development. In the field of youth sports training, studies on multi-stakeholder collaborative governance and regulation highlight the importance of institutional standards, rule transparency, and accountability mechanisms for the quality of market operations. Meanwhile, research on family factors indicates that parental time resources, educational arrangements, and risk sensitivity significantly influence the sustained participation of youth.

Based on the aforementioned research, this study proposes a conceptual framework: service quality (encompassing professionalism, safety, transparent communication, progress visualization, institutional convenience, and resource provision) → satisfaction and trust → renewal behavior. Attrition, conversely, is largely triggered when "insufficient value evidence or trust gaps" lead to unstable value judgments, culminating under the accumulation of service friction and the triggering of risk thresholds.

Table 1 Basic Information of Participants.

No.	Group (Renewal/Attrition)	Student Age	Training Objective	Training Frequency (sessions/week)	Renewal Duration / Training Suspension Duration	Remarks (e.g., competitions, injuries, academic pressure)
P01-P10	Renewal	7-16	Interest cultivation, technical improvement, and competition preparation	1-3	6-18 months of stable training or renewal	District/school-level competitions; occasional academic pressure
P11-P18	Attrition	8-16	Skill improvement, exercise maintenance, and competition preparation	1-3	8-16 weeks of suspension or explicit termination	Scheduling pressure, fatigue/minor injury concerns, academic pressure

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

This study employs a comparative qualitative case study design, focusing on the differing formation mechanisms behind "renewal" and "attrition" within youth tennis

private coaching services. The research subjects consist of adolescent trainees aged 7 to 18 and their parents (who serve as the primary payers and decision-makers), with the research setting situated within the context of private tennis coaching services in Beijing.

3.2 Sample and Grouping

The renewal group was defined as families with consecutive renewals for ≥ 2 cycles or stable training for ≥ 6 months; the attrition group was defined as families who had suspended classes or discontinued payment for ≥ 8 weeks, or had explicitly terminated the service. Purposive sampling was adopted to cover different age groups, training objectives, and training frequencies as much as possible, so as to enhance the transferability of the explanations.

In this study, a total of $N=18$ parents were interviewed (Renewal Group $n=10$, Attrition Group $n=8$), with optional brief interviews conducted with $n=6$ trainees. Supplementary materials included 48 communication records and 32 scheduling/make-up class records. The data collection period was from January 2026 to March 2026.

3.3 Data Collection

Data sources included: (1) semi-structured interviews with parents (approximately 30–40 minutes per person); (2) optional brief interviews with student participants; (3) with consent obtained and anonymization completed, collection of scheduling/make-up class records, periodic feedback, and communication excerpts; and (4) researcher reflection memos.

3.4 Data Analysis: Thematic Analysis and Cross-Group Comparison

A thematic analysis process following the Braun & Clarke approach was adopted: familiarizing with the data $\rightarrow$ generating initial codes $\rightarrow$ producing candidate themes $\rightarrow$ reviewing and refining themes $\rightarrow$ defining and naming themes $\rightarrow$ presenting the findings. Simultaneously, a cross-group constant comparison method was integrated to contrast the differences in expression regarding the same themes between the renewal and attrition groups, thereby extracting the mechanistic chains.

3.5 Credibility and Ethics

Credibility was enhanced through data triangulation, cross-group comparison, member checking (confirming key interpretations via follow-up), and researcher reflection records. Strict adherence to research ethics regarding minors was maintained: informed consent was obtained from guardians, all materials were de-identified, and participants were free to withdraw at any time.

IV. RESEARCH FINDINGS

Based on thematic analysis and cross-group comparison between the renewal and attrition groups, this study identifies five core themes. The findings are presented below under the structure of "Theme Definition—Renewal

Group Manifestations—Attrition Group Manifestations—Theme Summary," with quotes cited using participant codes.

Theme 1: Value Evidence—How Progress is Made Visible and Convincing

The primary distinction between renewal and attrition centers on the clarity of "value evidence." Renewing families emphasize visualized evidence, such as phased goals, post-class feedback, and video/metric comparisons, to reduce uncertainty regarding training outcomes. P01 noted: "After every class, you tell me what we worked on today and what needs to be achieved next time... The short video comparisons are easy for me to understand." (P01, renewal parent, child aged 12). P02 also highlighted the value of "quantified data": "Serve success rates, fewer double faults... that is the proof of effectiveness for me." (P02, renewal parent, child aged 15).

In contrast, churning families more frequently expressed narratives of "not seeing any change." P11 stated: "After training for months, I still don't know where exactly he has improved... Parents need something tangible to see." (P11, attrition parent, child aged 13). When the training path and evidence provision are insufficient, parents struggle to form a stable judgment on the return on investment, increasing the propensity to exit.

Theme Summary: Value evidence is the critical starting point of the renewal pathway. Its function is not merely to enhance satisfaction, but to stabilize the parent's value judgment.

Theme 2: Trust—The Relationship Buffer During Volatility

The trust narratives of the renewal group emphasize "responsibility, communicativeness, explanatory ability, and responsiveness to the child's condition." P01 mentioned: "When the child is in a bad state, you first ask why... and you can clearly explain things when problems arise." (P01, renewal parent, child aged 12). Trust leads families to choose "communication and adjustment first" during periods of training volatility.

The attrition group is more prone to trust gaps arising from the communication experience. P12 noted: "Responses were slow, or very vague... At the very least, I need to know which path the child is on." (P12, attrition parent, child aged 16). Once trust is undermined, expectation gaps, service frictions, and risk concerns are more likely to compound and precipitate attrition.

Theme Summary: Trust serves as a buffer in youth private coaching services, determining whether families choose to adjust or exit during periods of volatility.

Theme 3: Expectation Management & Gap Repair

The renewal group is more able to accept explanations of "phased progress" and maintain engagement despite short-term setbacks. P01 stated: "You break the goals down into very specific details, so I can accept that progress happens in stages." (P01, renewal parent, child aged 12).

The attrition group more frequently experiences an unresolved gap characterized by "unclear direction and non-specific plans." P11 pointed out: "Parents want a more concrete plan... The less specific it is, the less I know whether to keep investing." (P11, attrition parent, child aged 13).

Theme Summary: Failure in expectation management does not necessarily trigger immediate dissatisfaction, but it gradually erodes the meaning of continued investment, prompting exit when alternative options and time pressures emerge.

Theme 4: Service Frictions—Loss Accumulation from Rules and Coordination Costs

Service frictions manifest as costs related to scheduling, make-up class rules, and coordination. The renewal group emphasizes "transparent and predictable rules." P02 noted: "As long as the rules are transparent, I don't get caught up in details; instead, I feel it saves me trouble." (P02, renewal parent, child aged 15).

The attrition group more often attributes the suspension of classes to the accumulation of frictions. P11 stated: "The scheduling process exhausted me... I felt the cost was too high. Later, I just thought, let's stop for a while." (P11, attrition parent, child aged 13).

Theme Summary: Service frictions have a cumulative effect that continuously erodes the willingness to renew against a backdrop of high time constraints, representing a high-frequency pathway from hesitation to attrition.

Theme 5: Risk & Safety Threshold—The Baseline Condition for Renewal

For minors, a sense of safety constitutes the baseline threshold for renewal. The renewal group emphasizes that warm-ups, intensity control, and injury management enhance this sense of safety. P02 stated: "You always start with warm-ups and adjust the intensity based on the condition... I feel you understand risk control, so I am comfortable renewing." (P02, renewal parent, child aged 15).

The attrition group is more likely to exit after fatigue or minor injuries occur. P12 noted: "Our family has zero tolerance for injuries... I felt the risk of continuing was too high, so let's stop first." (P12, attrition parent, child aged 16).

Theme Summary: The safety threshold is both the result of risk events and the boundary of the family's overall judgment regarding service sustainability.

Integrating the five themes, this study proposes a process-based mechanistic explanation of renewal versus attrition: Renewing families are more likely to obtain clear value evidence during continuous training, and through trust, maintain their tolerance for engagement during periods of volatility. When expectation gaps occur, coaches repair them by explaining training cycles and breaking down goals. Transparent rules reduce the accumulation of service frictions, while safety management acts as a baseline threshold safeguarding long-term investment. Conversely, the attrition pathway is often initiated by unstable value judgments resulting from insufficient value evidence. Trust gaps amplify communication costs and gap experiences, service frictions accumulate and cause loss under time pressure, and exit is triggered by risk concerns or fatigue events.

V. DISCUSSION

5.1 Theoretical Refinement of Key Findings: Renewal as a Process of Value Judgment Stabilization, Not a Satisfaction Outcome

The comparative findings indicate that the decision to renew is closer to a time-unfolding process of stabilizing value judgments. Renewing families form stable interpretations of the return on investment through continuous evidence provision; conversely, churning families are more prone to "invisible/unexplainable" uncertainty, inclining toward exit once friction accumulates or risk triggers emerge [1-3].

5.2 The Value Evidence Mechanism: From Service Quality Perception to Verifiable Value Proof

In the context of youth private tennis coaching, parents' assessment of service quality relies heavily on the visibility of value proof. Evidence-based delivery reduces information asymmetry and uncertainty, making it easier to convert satisfaction into renewal behavior [1,2,4].

5.3 Redefining the Role of Trust: A Relationship Buffer and Tolerance for Decision-Making During Volatility

Trust in this study functions as a relationship buffer when facing training volatility, academic conflicts, and competitive pressure. Trust in the renewal group is established through three cues: professional reliability, transparent communication, and visible risk management. A trust gap amplifies other negative experiences and accelerates attrition [1,5-7].

5.4 Expectation Management and Gap Repair: Attrition Stems from Insufficient Explanatory Mechanisms, Not Excessive Demands

The renewal group accepts phased progress because coaches provide the path and language to repair gaps at critical junctures. The attrition group often leaves expectation gaps unresolved due to non-specific plans, ultimately ending uncertainty by suspending classes [1-3,8,9].

5.5 Accumulated Damage from Service Frictions: From Experiential Issues to Micro-Governance Issues

Scheduling, make-up classes, and rule transparency constitute micro-governance variables. Unclear rules and inconsistent execution significantly raise family coordination costs, creating cumulative damage under high time constraints and driving the shift from hesitation to attrition [2,3,10].

5.6 Risk and Safety Thresholds: The Baseline Variable in Services for Minors

A sense of safety is the baseline threshold for renewal. Exit is not necessarily caused by major injury, but more often triggered by the compounding of persistent fatigue and insufficient explanation. Safety management needs to be made explicit to stabilize parents' risk assessment [11-13].

5.7 Theoretical Contributions

First, this study proposes a process model of value judgment stabilization within the service quality–satisfaction/trust–loyalty framework. Second, it reveals the structural amplification effect resulting from the separation of payer and user. Third, it elevates service friction to a micro-governance variable, providing an operational direction for subsequent quantitative testing [9,12].

5.8 Managerial Implications

- (1) Evidence-based delivery: Implement fixed-cycle progress reports.
- (2) Trust maintenance: Establish communication response and debriefing mechanisms.
- (3) Expectation calibration: Set milestones and phased goals.
- (4) Friction governance: Simplify rules to a one-page policy and execute with minimal exceptions.
- (5) Safety threshold: Make workload control and alternative training plans explicit [2,9,13].

5.9 Limitations and Future Research

This study is bounded by a single urban setting. Future research can conduct comparisons across multiple cities and organizational forms; incorporate longitudinal tracking and multi-party perspectives; and operationalize the

propositions of this study into scales or behavioral indicators for mixed-methods testing [2,8,9].

VI. CONCLUSION

Through comparative thematic analysis, this study reveals that the key to enhancing renewal in Beijing's youth private tennis coaching services lies in stabilizing parents' value judgments through evidence-based, explainable, and predictable delivery mechanisms, while reducing service friction through rule governance and enhancing the sustainability of long-term engagement through the management of safety thresholds. The findings offer an actionable strategic framework for retention governance in tennis private coaching and training institutions.

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